

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) Meeting held by Zoom on Wednesday, 8 December 2021 at 8pm

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Chris Davies (Secretary), Colin Stevenson, Tom Forrest, Sally Cook, Steve Schnabel, Mat Webster, Cllr. Alex MacInnes

7 members of the public.

Before the meeting started, CH informed members that CD wished to stand down as a member and Secretary of TKCC. She thanked CD for her invaluable input and the brilliant job she had done, in particular in getting things organised with a new website, Facebook page, emails etc.

CH was pleased to say Sue Whiting had agreed to replace CD and it was unanimously agreed by members that she should be co-opted onto the committee.

1. Apologies

Alpin Stewart, Lynn Frost.

2. Minutes of meeting on 3 November 2021

Approved subject to the following amendment in item 5: There is currently £244.87 in the Covid 19 grant fund.

3. Matters arising from minutes of 3 November

Torridon road sign – MW has contacted Dot Ferguson to ask whether the brown tourist sign pointing to Fasaig at the junction with the A896 could be reinstated. She is investigating and has agreed to consult the community about the content of any replacement sign.

First Responders – On hold as it is not clear who we should contact.

Torridon Post Office – Lochcarron PO is now providing a post office outreach service in Torridon Community Centre. It is open every Tuesday, 11am-1pm.

NatureScot – Loch Maree islands – No comments on the draft code of conduct circulated by NatureScot. Doug Bartholomew of NatureScot will be invited to a future TKCC meeting.

Action: CH

Slattadale Forest Plan – Deferred until next meeting.

Action: CS

TKCC email addresses – We have agreed to continue with our current addresses.

Paul Bolton – NTS ranger. Paul has invited CH to participate in discussions with architects about a possible replacement for the NTS visitor centre building.

Action: CH

Planning applications - Peatland Restoration - Ref. No: 21/04753/PNO – the deadline for comment had passed.

Erection of new bunkhouse and meeting area - Ref. No: 21/04667/PIP – TKCC’s concerns were submitted to HC, these included issues of inadequate water supply, road/pedestrian safety, sewage/foul water drainage.

Community Christmas hampers – CH spoke to the organisers and passed on our comments.

BT/EE 4G outage – The service is now running again. CH asked for HC Councillors help in resilience planning. AM said they are pushing for this all the time, including for BT to roll out hardwiring throughout the area as part of the R-100 scheme. He will send details of the person who is leading on this. See <https://www.gov.scot/news/delivering-r100/>

Action: AM

4. Lynn Frost – Highland Council Community Support Co-ordinator

Unfortunately Lynn was unable to attend, so we will re-schedule.

5. Treasurer’s report

Nothing to report, no change in bank balances.

6. Roads and gritting

CH described the terrible state of the roads in our area. The verges are dire and there are a huge number of very bad potholes. These must be costing HC a lot of money, with all the claims by motorists for damage to their cars.

The A896 is suffering from the NC500 as well as from huge lorries that go up and down it every day. On the Torridon to Diabaig road, the surface of the Coire Mhic Nobuil bridge can barely be called a surface, and the bridge at Wester Alligin that was damaged 3 years ago by a gritter truck has still not been repaired.

In a further sign of neglect, SC has estimated that around 50% of the passing place signs are either damaged or rusting away.

CH asked AM for his urgent help in the matter. She thanked him for what he has done, for example we have recently been contacted by Colin Howell and Simon Farrow (HC Infrastructure), however unfortunately it is nowhere near enough.

AM explained that Ward 5 of HC has broken away from the Ross and Cromarty administrative area and formed the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee (WRSLC). WRSLC comprises the Ward 5 councillors - Ian Cockburn (Chair), AM, Derek Macleod, Biz Campbell – as well as Dot Ferguson.

As part of the breakaway, WRSLC has disaggregated the roads budget and managed to secure more funding. With funds now based on road mileage, WRSLC is entitled to 48% of HC’s total roads budget of £20m (previously 27%). This has meant they have been able to increase the workforce and do much more this year. With a similar level of funding expected next year, AM expects a similar level of activity.

WRSCLC has autonomy over how its funding of approx. £10m for roads is spent (there is a separate budget for bridges for the whole HC area). Decisions are made by the committee based on discussions with Colin Howell about priorities and reports/ workplans from HC officers.

AM agreed the roads were in a terrible state, and said they had not been invested in properly for a very long time. He apologised for what people in our area are going through, saying it was not acceptable. He also explained that WRSCLC needs to work through the priorities for the whole ward.

TF highlighted the issue of huge lorries using the Kinlochewe to Torridon road to service Kishorn port. He said some were up to 200 tonnes. He asked AM whether the time had come to ask for help from the Scottish government.

AM suggested that representatives from TKCC attend the next Ward 5 business meeting in early January. This will be attended by all the WRSCLC members and would give us an opportunity to explain our concerns and talk to people who know the whole picture. All agreed this would be a good idea, especially since there is no point in our pushing for roads in our area to be upgraded (for example), if roads elsewhere are being upgraded that would alleviate our problems. AM will therefore send us an invite.

Action: AM

AM was asked to provide a copy of the current workplan for roads in Ward 5. He agreed to send this after the meeting.

Action: AM

AM was also asked for a list of priorities in Ward 5. He said Colin Howell had just conducted a road and bridge survey to define these and he would give us a copy before the ward business meeting.

Action: AM

With regard to gritting, information and telephone numbers can be found here:
https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/721/ross_and_cromarty

7. Community development plan survey

MW reported that the launch events in Torridon Community Centre and Kinlochewe Hall went very well, and he thanked everyone who was involved.

The action planning team is very pleased that the survey has been well received, with around 100 completed surveys received so far. SCDC will start the process of evaluating these in the new year.

Since clear there are more people who would like to respond, the survey will now remain open until 31 December to enable more to complete it. A reminder will be circulated online and flyers will be dropped through letterboxes.

Action: MW

The survey can be found on the TKCC website, and paper copies are available. Cash prizes of up to £100 can also be won.

8. Planning application

21/05069/FUL – Erection of a log cabin, workshop and siting of container (Retrospective) – Malt Croft, Kinlochewe IV22 2PA.

No comments.

9. Correspondence received

- Torridon Primary School. Ian Jackson of HC has recently confirmed that the playpark is owned by HC. The playpark is also subject to a pre-emption clause whereby it cannot be sold without it first being offered to NTS.

In view of the very long time since HC met with local parents and TKCC about plans for the school, Ian Jackson has suggested further meetings take place and he will be in touch about dates.

10. Any Other Competent Business

Proposed dates and times of next meetings to be circulated separately.

Action: CH